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AUTHOR Farland, Ronnald W.
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ABSTRACT

This staff analysis by the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges discusses and offers recommendations concerning the report, "Proposals for Strengthening the Associate Degree in the California Community Colleges," by the Task Force on Academic Quality. The paper begins with brief staff comments on the associate degree report, concluding that: (1) the lack of clear and commonly held criteria for distinguishing offerings applicable to associate degrees from those designed to accommodate underprepared students has resulted in colleges adopting a variety of practices and standards; and (2) the varying practices and standards of the colleges in determining which courses applied to the degree, together with broadly stated minimum legal requirements for the degree, have permitted variability of rigor and structure within degree titles and have subjected the degree to the same credibility problems arising nationwide. The next section discusses standards of rigor for degree applicable courses. After citing the Task Force proposal that "...the single most effective way to strengthen the associate degree would be to establish, in regulation, standards or criteria to assure that courses which are applied to the degree are taught with a level of academic rigor appropriate to the degree" and to identify "...in terms of curriculum structure which courses are and are not applicable to the degree," the staff analysis recommends the endorsement of modifications to Title 5 which would implement the Task Force recommendations. Next, recommendations are made with respect to redefining or restructuring associate degrees, including a recommendation for a study by the Chancellor of the need for such an effort, and encouragement of collaborative efforts between community colleges and four-year institutions, and of articulated occupational programs. (AYC)

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PROPOSALS FOR STRENGTHENING THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE: STAFF ANALYSIS OF A REPORT FROM THE TASK FORCE ON ACADEMIC QUALITY

RONNALD W. FARLAND
ADMINISTRATOR
SPECIAL PROJECTS

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
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AGENDA ITEM 1

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Board of Governors of the
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May 30-31, 1985

Item 1

Title: Proposals for Strengthening the Associate Degree: Staff Analysis of a Report from the Task Force on Academic Quality

Staff Presentation: Ronnald W. Farland, Administrator
Special Projects

Summary

In January 1985, the Chancellor shared with the Board a report from the Task Force on Academic Quality called "Proposals for Strengthening the Associate Degree in the California Community Colleges." The Chancellor indicated that the report would be widely distributed for review and comment and that staff would then provide an analysis of and recommendations regarding the report to the Board. This item provides the analysis and recommendations, and is presented to the Board for action.

Staff recommendations include: a) a proposal to modify Title 5 regulations to add new standards of rigor for degree-applicable credit courses and to distinguish such courses from credit courses not applicable to the degree (i.e., remediation); and b) two proposals to direct staff to take actions that could result in redefining and/or restructuring the associate degree in the future. With one exception the item does incorporate those modifications to the proposed Title 5 language that were requested by the Educational Policy Committee in its April review of the item.

Recommended Action

The Educational Policy Committee should recommend that the President declare a public hearing, that the full Board endorse the regulations which commence on page 4, and that the Board delegate to the Chancellor the necessary authority to adopt the regulations in accordance with the Board's direction.

The Educational Policy Committee should also recommend that the full Board approve Recommendations 2 and 3 on page 9.

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BACKGROUND

In January 1985, the Chancellor received two reports from the Task Force on Academic Quality, one concerning the provision of remedial courses and services in community colleges and the other containing proposals for strengthening the associate degree. These companion pieces were shared with the Board at its January meeting and widely disseminated among community college constituents for review and comment. The items were then reviewed by the Board as information in April.

This item is comprised of brief staff comments on the associate degree report and recommendations for Board action that are substantively consistent with the proposals offered by the Task Force. With one exception, the item also incorporates those modifications to the proposed Title 5 language that were requested by the Educational Policy Committee in its April review. The exception is that staff has not been able to identify appropriate language to accommodate the request to remove the phrase "or other appropriate faculty body" from Sections 55002(a) and (b) without raising larger governance questions. Since that change is unrelated to the substance of the item anyway, staff proposes that additional deliberations occur to develop language that will acknowledge academic senates as the appropriate vehicles for assuring faculty participation in curriculum development and approval.

STAFF COMMENTS

The Task Force report proposes that three actions be taken by the Board to strengthen the value and public image of the associate degree awarded by community colleges in California. The first, which would be accomplished by amendments to Title 5 of the Administrative Code, would have the immediate effects of: a) establishing significantly more detailed and rigorous criteria for the conduct of those courses that apply to the degree, and b) establishing curriculum content levels below which courses would not apply to the degree. The second and third proposed actions would initiate activities over the next seven months, by the Chancellor and the districts, respectively, which would aim to determine whether there is also need to redefine or restructure the degree itself in order to assure that the degree is valued by students, by employers, and by other segments of education. The outcomes of those activities would be reported to the Board in December 1985.

Appendix A contains background information and observations which suggest that the three proposed actions result from common understandings about the evolution and current status of the degree as well as changing conditions in the colleges over time. These common understandings, which closely parallel the findings and conclusions of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges' Task Force on Redefining the Associate Degree, led the Task Force on Academic Quality to two implied conclusions which staff would characterize as follows:

Conclusion 1. During an extended period when the curriculum was expanding and when a growing public policy commitment to open access was creating unprecedented diversity in entering students' educational objectives, background and abilities, there was a lack of clear

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and commonly held criteria for distinguishing associate degree applicable offerings from those others that were found to be necessary to respond to the needs of students who entered the "open door." As a result, colleges adopted varying practices and standards.

Among the options available to them were these:

a) Maintain collegiate standards in courses, and allow underprepared students to "fall where they may";

b) Maintain collegiate standards in courses, but provide remedial/preparatory courses. (Then decide whether to grant degree credit for some or all of the remedial work.);

c) Lower standards in collegiate courses or create new courses to accommodate underprepared students.

Conclusion 2. The Education Code limits the titles of community college degrees that can be offered to the associate in arts and the associate in science, so the proliferation of degree titles that has occurred in other states has not occurred in California. Nevertheless, the varying practices and standards of the colleges in determining which courses apply to the degree, together with broadly stated minimum legal requirements for the degree, have permitted the same variability of rigor and structure within those titles and has, therefore, subjected the degree to the same credibility problems as have been found in the recent national study.

Standards of Rigor for Degree Applicable Courses

The Task Force report proposed that "... the single most effective way to strengthen the associate degree would be to establish, in regulation, standards or criteria to assure that courses which are applied to the degree are taught with a level of 'academic rigor' appropriate to the degree" and to identify "... in terms of curriculum structure, which courses are and are not applicable to the degree." Consequently, the report proposed additions and modifications to Title 5, Section 55002, as shown on pages 9-11 of Appendix B.

In addition to creating new, higher and more detailed standards for those courses that would apply to the degree, the proposed language would also have the effect of retaining existing standards for credit courses as those that would pertain in courses not applicable to the degree. This latter category would consist chiefly of remedial courses which, the Task Force argued in its report on remediation (See Item 2, Appendix A of today's Board Agenda), should be offered in the credit mode when their purpose is "... to bring students to skills levels which enable them to perform successfully in college level degree and certificate courses."

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Staff concurs with the basic intent of the Title 5 language proposed by the Task Force. However, staff believes that this intent would be clearer if presented in a somewhat different format. Specifically, staff believes that:

1. Some of the new, more detailed criteria posited for degree applicable courses are actually elaborations on existing criteria for all credit courses and, in the proposed format, therefore, would appear to be redundant or confusing; and

2. That portion of the proposed new language that is stated in terms of curriculum structure is inappropriate for placement in Section 55002 ("Standards and Criteria for Courses and Classes"), but is appropriate for Section 55805 ("Philosophy and Criteria for Associate Degree and General Education").

Therefore, the language proposed by staff in Recommended Action 1 below:

1. re-orders Section 55002 to begin with the criteria to be used for associate degree applicable courses (i.e., the "highest" level of credit course), including the new criteria and retaining only those existing criteria which are not redundant, and follows with a restatement of all the existing criteria as those to be used for credit courses not applicable to the degree;

2. places those standards that are stated in terms of curriculum structure in Section 55805 and conjoins them with Section 55002 to assure that all of the Task Force's proposed standards will pertain in identifying courses applicable to the degree.

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the following:

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Board should endorse the modifications of Title 5, Section 55002 and Section 55805 as shown below, to take effect July 1, 1986, with the understanding that, should other recommendations in this report result in changes in the title(s) or requirements for the associate degree(s), there may be a need to further amend Title 5 at a later date.

Resolution

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges that it hereby endorses the following changes to regulations in Title 5, Part VI of the California Administrative Code, to become effective July 1, 1986:

(1) Section 55002 is repealed.

(2) New Section 55002 is added, to read:

55002. Standards and Criteria for Courses and Classes.
(a) An associate degree credit course is a course which has been designated as appropriate to the associate degree in accordance with Section 55805(b), and, at a minimum:

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(1) Is recommended by the responsible college officials and the academic senate or other appropriate faculty body, as meeting the requirements of this subsection and has been approved by the local district governing board as a collegiate course meeting the needs of the students eligible for admission.

(2) Is taught by a credentialed instructor.

(3) Is offered as described in an outline and/or curriculum guide in official files. That outline and/or curriculum guide shall specify the unit value, scope, objectives, content in terms of a specific body of knowledge, appropriate readings and writing, and outside assignments, instructional methodology and methods of evaluation for determining whether the stated objectives have been met by students.

(4) Is taught in accordance with a set of instructional objectives common to all students enrolled in the course.

(5) Provides for measurement of student performance in terms of the stated course objectives and culminates in a formal recorded grade based upon uniform standards in accordance with Section 55758 of this part, which is permanently recorded as an evaluation of student performance; bases grades on demonstrated proficiency in subject matter determined by multiple measurement for evaluation; and has examinations, including essays and/or, where appropriate, uses appropriate symbol systems and/or skills demonstrations by students.

(6) Grants units of credit based upon a specified relationship between the number of units assigned to the course and the number of lecture and/or laboratory hours of performance criteria specified in the course outline; and requires a minimum of three hours of work per week including class time for each unit of credit and prorated for short term, lab and activity courses.

(7) Treats subject matter with an intensity that has an expectation for learner independence that is appropriate for a college course.

(8) Requires, when appropriate, entrance skills and consequent prerequisites.

(9) Requires eligibility for associate degree level courses in English and/or mathematics when language and/or computational skills at such a level are approved by the local board as necessary for success in the course.

(10) Requires the ability to think critically and to understand and apply concepts in order to participate in the course.

(11) Requires learning skills and a vocabulary appropriate for a college course.

(12) Requires the use of college level educational materials.

(13) Allows repeated enrollment only as permitted by provisions of Division 2 (commencing with Section 51000), Sections 55761-55763 and 58161 of this part.

(b) A credit course designated by the governing board of a district as not applicable to the associate degree is a course which, at a minimum:

(1) Is recommended by the responsible college officials, and the academic senate or other appropriate faculty body as meeting the requirements of this subsection and has been approved by the local

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district governing board as a course meeting the needs of the students eligible for admission.

(2) Is taught by a credentialed instructor.

(3) Is offered as described in an outline and/or curriculum guide in official college files. That outline and/or curriculum guide shall specify the unit value, scope, objectives, content in terms of a specific body of knowledge, appropriate readings and writing, and outside assignments, instructional methodology and methods of evaluation for determining whether the stated objectives have been met by students.

(4) Is taught in accordance with a set of instructional objectives common to all students.

(5) Provides for measurement of student performance in terms of the stated course objectives and culminates in a formal recorded grade based upon uniform standards in accordance with Section 55758 of this part, which is permanently recorded as an evaluation of student performance.

(6) Grants units of credit based upon a specified relationship between the number of units assigned to the course and the number of lecture and/or laboratory hours or performance criteria specified in the course outline.

(7) Shall require, when appropriate, the completion of prerequisites for the course before students are enrolled.

(8) Allows repeated enrollment only as permitted by provisions of Division 2 (commencing with Section 51000) Sections 55761-55763 and 58161 of this part).

(c) A noncredit course is a course which, at a minimum:

(1) Is approved by the local district governing board as a course meeting the educational needs of the enrolled students.

(2) Is taught by a credentialed instructor. A supplementary lecturer need not hold a credential if he or she lectures fewer than four times in a semester or quarter.

(3) Treats subject matter and uses resource materials, teaching methods, and standards of attendance and achievement appropriate for the enrolled students.

(4) Is conducted in accordance with a course outline and/or curriculum guide in official college files. That outline and/ or curriculum guide shall specify the scope, objectives, content, instructional methodology, and methods of evaluation for determining whether the course objectives have been met.

(d) A community services class at a minimum:

(1) Is approved by the local district governing board.

(2) Is designed for the physical, mental, moral, economic, or civic development of persons enrolled therein.

(3) Provides subject matter content, resource materials, and teaching methods appropriate for the enrolled students.

(4) Is conducted in accordance with a predetermined strategy or plan.

(5) Is open to all members of the community.

(6) Attendance in community services classes may not be claimed for apportionment purposes.

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NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66700, 71020, 71027 and 78405 Education Code. Reference: Sections 71027, 78200 and 78405, Education Code.

Staff comment: The net effects of this proposed change to Section 55002 are:

1. *to replace the existing list of criteria which pertain to all credit courses with two separate lists of criteria; one that pertains in credit courses that may be applied to the associate degree (subsection a), and one that pertains to credit courses that are not applicable to the degree (subsection b). It also retains the existing language concerning non-credit courses (subsection c) and community service classes (subsection d).*

2. *to make the new subsection (a), for degree applicable courses, more rigorous than the existing language for all credit courses by:*

   a) *adding five new criteria (critical thinking skills, college level vocabulary and study skills, use of college level reading materials, ability to work independently, and eligibility for degree level courses in English and mathematics when such skills are necessary for success in other courses); and*

   b) *expanding or modifying three of the existing criteria for credit courses (requires multiple measures of student performance when assigning grades, including essays and/or, where appropriate, skills demonstrations; requires specified hours of homework outside of class; and requires entrance skills, when appropriate, as well as course prerequisites).*

3. *to retain in new subsection (b), for credit courses not applicable to the degree, all the existing criteria for all credit courses.*

4. *to cross reference Section 55002 with Section 55805 to make both sections relevant in colleges' determinations of which courses are and are not applicable to the associate degree.*

3. Section 55805 is amended, to read:

55805. Philosophy and Criteria for Associate Degree and General Education.

(a) The governing board of a community college district shall adopt policy which states its specific philosophy on General Education. In developing this policy governing boards shall consider the following policy of the Board of Governors:

The awarding of an Associate Degree is intended to represent more than an accumulation of units. It is to symbolize a successful attempt on the part of the college to lead students through patterns of learning experiences designed to develop certain capabilities and insights. Among these are the ability to think and to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing; to use mathematics; to understand the modes of inquiry of the major disciplines;

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to be aware of other cultures and times; to achieve insights gained through experience in thinking about etnical problems; and t develop the capacity for self-understanding. In addition to these accomplishments, the student shall possess sufficient depth in some field of knowledge to contribute to lifetime interest.

Central to an Associate Degree, General Education is designed to introduce students to the variety of means through which people comprehend the modern world. It reflects the conviction of colleges that those who receive their degrees must possess in common certain basic principles, concepts and methodologies both unique to and shared by the various disciplines. College educated persons must be able to use this knowledge when evaluating and appreciating the physical environment, the culture, and the society in which they live. Most importantly, General Education should lead to better self-understanding.

In establishing or modifying a general education program, ways shall be sought to create coherence and integration among the separate requirements. It is also desirable that general education programs involve students actively in examining values inherent in proposed solutions to major social problems.

(b) The governing board of a community college district shall also establish criteria to determine which courses may be used in implementing its philosophy on the associate degree and general education. Such criteria shall conform to the standards specified in Section 55002(a) and shall also provide that associate degree appropriate courses:

(1) Include all lower division courses at the baccalaureate level.

(2) Include courses that apply to the major in non-baccalaureate occupational fields.

(3) Include English courses not more than one level below English 1A.

(4) Include all mathematics courses above and including Elementary Algebra.

(5) Include credit courses in English and mathematics taught in or on behalf of other departments and which, as determined by the local board of trustees, require entrance skills at a level equivalent to those necessary for the courses specified in subsections (3) and (4) above.

(c) The governing board of a community college district shall, on a regular basis, review the policy and criteria established pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of this section.

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66700, 71022 and 71066, Education Code. Reference: Sections 66701, 71066 and 72285, Education Code.

Staff comment: The net effects of this proposed addition to Section 55805 are:

1. *to specify, in terms of curriculum content, the lower level courses that can be applied to the associate degree. As a corollary, therefore, it*

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also defines credit courses below the specified levels as not applicable to the degree (i.e., remedial);

2. *to conjoin Section 55805(b) with Section 55002(a) to make both sections relevant in colleges' determinations of which courses are and are not applicable to the associate degree.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Board of Governors, acting under the authority of Section 71091 of the Education Code, that the authority to adopt the regulations on behalf of the Board is hereby delegated to the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges. In accordance with the delegation of this authority, the Chancellor shall make copies of these proposed regulations available to the public for a period of at least 45 days, conduct necessary hearings, and comply with all other procedures contained in the Administrative Procedures Act. The Chancellor shall then adopt the regulations as endorsed by the Board in this Resolution only if, in the Chancellor's opinion, no changes are necessary, as determined on the basis of any comments or objections offered.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these regulations mandate no cost to local agencies and community college districts within the meaning of Section 2231 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

Redefining or Restructuring Associate Degrees

While staff agrees with the Task Force report that the single most effective way to strengthen the associate degree would be to upgrade the criteria for rigor in courses that apply to the degree, it also acknowledges that certain issues raised in the Task Force's own deliberations as well as in the National Task Force report may not be adequately addressed by that action alone. Specifically, the staff suggests the degree itself, as currently defined and structured, does not necessarily attest that a student is prepared for transfer to a baccalaureate institution or for skilled employment. (See pages 8 and 9 and 11-13 of Appendix A). Therefore, the staff proposes that:

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Board should direct the Chancellor, with appropriate consultation with the colleges, to examine the need for redefining or restructuring an associate degree or degrees in California and report findings and recommendations to the Board by December 1985. The "Policy Statement on the Associate Degree" adopted by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges should be used as a resource in this examination.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Board should direct the Chancellor to encourage community colleges to: a) continue or initiate collaborative efforts with nearby campuses of the University and State University to develop joint, lower division "transfer programs," satisfactory completion of which would assure transfer at the junior level, and b) continue to develop, in conjunction with high schools and the business-industry community, articulated programs in occupational areas. Both types of efforts should be reported to the Chancellor for use in considering both whether there is a need to redefine or restructure an associate degree or degrees and, if so, what forms would be most appropriate.

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